

ADVENT

MMXX

Day 8 | Second Sunday of Advent, Dec. 6

He Rules and Reigns

"I tell you, among those born of women no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (And all the people who heard this, including the tax collectors, acknowledged the justice of God, because they had been baptized with John's baptism. But by refusing to be baptized by him, the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves.) "To what then will I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep.' For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Nevertheless, wisdom is vindicated by all her children." — Luke 7:28-35

Consider – Sometimes we can oppose Jesus without even knowing it. His ways are higher than our ways. He rules and reigns with decisions that might not have been our decisions if we had our way. Yet, He asks that we trust Him, and that includes trusting even when things don't make sense. In what ways are you wrestling with Jesus even now? What questions do you have for Him? What could bring you hope? How can you trust more?

Pray – Ask God to reveal how you are enchanted or pulled in other directions. Ask Him to show you how you've questioned Him, or even criticized His Son's Lordship. Ask for forgiveness so that your eyes can be opened even more to the beautiful reality of His ways that are far better than your ways. Tell Him you do not want this season to pass by too quickly in that you would miss His words to you.

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Day 9 | Monday, Dec. 7

Holding on to hope

So they took Jeremiah and dropped him into the cistern of Malchiah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah with ropes into the cistern, which had no water but only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud. – Jeremiah 38:6

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.
— Psalm 40:1-3

Consider – Have you ever felt stuck? Have you ever felt like you were sinking? Maybe you feel that way now – like there's no bottom, and very little hope that you will stand on firm ground again. Sometimes all we can do is wait for our rescue. The more we struggle and try to solve our situation, the worse it gets. Remember, Jesus has not forgotten you, no matter how muddy things are. He knows. He sees. He is faithful, and will rescue you.

Pray – Tell God that you know He is great and loving. Tell Him you are not good at waiting. Your patience can run thin. Tell Him that you know He is here with you and that you need His strength to keep fighting, but also to keep waiting. Ask Him to help you see, know and believe that He has all of this mess under His mighty hand and nothing is wasted our outside of His good plans.

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Day 10 | Tuesday, Dec. 8

A Christmas picture

Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man." — Luke 21:29–36

For those who say, "God has forgotten us," I say, "Open your eyes. God is with us, as promised. In the brilliance of a star, in the cry of a newborn baby, in the songs of the angels, and now, in a rare Christmas rainbow — yes, God is with us!"

Consider – You've probably heard people mutter, "God has forgotten us." Perhaps you've even felt that. And yet, we can tell ourselves again of God's promises – we can remind ourselves of His faithfulness. We can preach to ourselves the gospel again – That God so loved the world He gave His only Son. That's how much He gave and He will never forget any person because He has given too much to turn back now. He will also complete the good work He has started in you. Even if all you have is a mustard seed of hope.

Pray – Tell God that you know He is the God of the trees, the birds, and the stars. The same God who made everything around us, is the God who is still at work sustaining everything – even you. Ask that He would reveal Himself to you in a new and fresh way today. Ask that you would be able to worship Him for all He is and all He is doing now. Tell Him that.

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Day 11 | Wednesday, Dec. 9

Battered yet still blessed

Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"

They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again." — John 8:2–11

Consider – Notice how Jesus has no time for religion. He doesn't say, "Go, and sin no more, and then I will forgive you." Instead Jesus says, "I forgive you, now, Go and sin no more." We love because we were first loved. We forgive because He first forgave us. You may be scarred, marred, beat up, accused, stained, and dirty, but you are still loved, and if you hold to Jesus, you are also forgiven. That forgiveness was never merited, but fully gifted.

Pray – Rejoice. Proclaim your amazement and God's amazing grace through Jesus. Tell Him that you bring him your battered soul. Tell Him that you feel defeated, but that you are claiming His victory as you receive His forgiveness again. Tell Him why you are thankful and why you have hope.

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Day 12 | Thursday, Dec. 10

God signs abound

Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. Then

Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah — the king of Assyria."

— Isaiah 7:10-17

Consider – Have you ever asked God for a sign? Have you requested that He confirm His love, or your plans, or your future? Reflect back at the biggest, most clear billboard for His love that was ever given, His Son. A young woman gave birth to God's own Son, who was given, for you. A perfect life, lived for you. A death on your behalf. Do we need more of a sign than that?

Pray – As you prepare to pray, admit that you only see in part. Tell God that you know His Son, Jesus, is the perfect gift - that Jesus tells us of the love of the Father. Ask God to open your eyes even more to this wondrous and amazing sight. Imagine that day when Christ was born. Allow the beauty of Christmas to fuel your gratitude to God.



Day 13 | Friday, Dec. 11

The broken ornament

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. — Psalm 130

Consider – We are never asked in Scripture to have a blind faith, nor are we asked to have a blind hope. Our hope is always based on God’s character, promises, and faithfulness. We might not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. Our hope is in a person, and that God becomes even more clear, personal, and tangible at Christmas. When we see Jesus, we have seen the Father.

Pray – Tell God that you know Him. He is the God who is near and not distant. He is the God who is full of compassion and rich in mercy. Jesus is a friend of sinners. Your hope is not in being good enough to be loved, but that He has the type of love that includes people like you. Tell Him that He is your hope.



Day 14 | Saturday, Dec. 12

Our defense began at the manger

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down--he who accuses them day and night before our God. – Revelation 12:10

"Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your own faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death!" Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you have denied three times that you know me." — Luke 22:31-34

Consider – Satan wants to defeat you. We know that his purpose is till kill, steal and destroy. He is appropriately named the accuser of the brethren. He may be bringing accusation against you even now, related to your unworthiness, your failure, your rebellion against God. And yet, we have an advocate with the Father, the One who defends us based on His righteousness. He acquits you – He defends you.

Pray – Tell God that you don't feel worthy of His acceptance or His love, and yet you know that He accepts you. Tell Him that you have felt that accusations of satan against your soul. You have experienced the fiery arrows from the enemy. Ask God to comfort you and confirm His love again. Ask Jesus to be your defense.